

Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

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MINUTES

May 22, 2015

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, May 22, 2015 in the John J. Hainkel Jr. Room at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairwoman, Beth Courtney called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Beth Courtney (Chair)
Sen. Conrad Appel (proxy - Tamara Heidenthal)
Nancy Beben
Fredell Butler
Peggy Cotogno
Barry Erwin
Richard Hartley (proxy - Ashley Herrick)
Brenda Hodge (proxy - Morgan Blanchard)
Terry Landry
Criketa Matlock
Lawrence Narcisse
Kelly Pepper (proxy - Fairleigh Jackson)
Sanettria "Sam" Pleasant (proxy - Deidre Robert)
Lauren Russell
Anita Sexton
William Stroud (proxy - Jawanna Mason)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sen. Yovvne Dorsey-Colomb (Vice-Ch)
John Alexander
Rep. Steve Carter
Carolyn Hill
Rep. Patrick Jefferson
Polly Johnson
Judge Wendell Manning
Pamela Mitchell-Wagner
Judge Karen Roby
Sarah Turner

STAFF PRESENT

Tammy Crain-Waldrop, Researcher
Nanette Normand, Administrative Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Fredell Butler made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 14, 2014 meeting, and there being no objection, the minutes were approved.

IV. BUSINESS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Ms. Courtney began the meeting by stating that the Commission's main topic was to approve the members of the 2015-2016 Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Ms. Cotogno read the names of the applicants for approval:

2015-2016 LYAC MEMBERS

Congressional District 1

Nicholas Foster, Northshore High School

Maria Heredia, Grace King High School

Congressional District 2

Sundae-Marie Brumfield, Capitol High School

Tamiko Stroud, Ascension Catholic High School

Congressional District 3

Breanna Guidry, Hathaway High School

Katie Magar, Magnolia and Pecans Academy

Congressional District 4

John Henry Hobgood, Loyola College Prep

Matthew Fontenot, Kinder High School

Congressional District 5

Jacob Chandler, Jena High School

Jacob Peters, Jena High School

Congressional District 6

Rashaud Red, Mentorship Academy

Tyler Legnon, H.L. Bourgeois High School

At Large Members

Arianna Worthy, St. Frederick Catholic High School

Cory Koch, Bolton High School

Scarlett Hammond, St. Frederick Catholic High School

Elizabeth Feltner, University Laboratory School
Tyler Welch, A.M Barbe High School
Paxton dePingre', C.E. Byrd High School
Sarah Procopio, Baton Rouge Magnet High School
Sasha Patterson, H.L. Bourgeois High School
Abigail Waag, St. Scholastica Academy

2015-2016 LYAC ALTERNATES

Congressional District 1

Mark Richardson, St. Thomas Aquinas Regional Catholic High School
Sonali Mirpuri, Northshore High School

Congressional District 2

Sydney Brown, St. James High School
Caitlyn Arnold, Urusline Academy High School

Congressional District 3

Elise LaFleur, St. Thomas More Catholic High School
Chad Fuselier, Lafayette High School

Congressional District 4

Myeisha McDonald, Homer High School
Amanda Watson, Airline High School

Congressional District 5

Walker Stinson, St. Fredericks High School
David Dixon, Tallulah Academy

Congressional District 6

Marian Luzier, Walker High School
Jakayla Davis, Lee Magnet High School

At Large Alternates

Dustin Ford, Opelousas High School
Matthew Authement, Holy Savior Menard High School
Claire Renegar, St. Amant High School
Jacob Cheatwood, St. Amant High School
Meredith Ashby, Pineville High School
Carson Handley, C.E. Byrd High School
Chelsea Beasley, Negreet High School
Lauren Harrell, Winnfield Senior High School
Christopher Bourgeois, St. Amant High School

Ms. Courtney stated that there were 67 applicants this year.

Fredell Butler commended all the applicants for taking the time to apply and that it was a pleasure to read through so many wonderful applicants.

Barry Erwin made a motion to approve the members of the 2015 - 2016 Legislative Youth Advisory Council, and without objection, the members were approved.

Two of the newly appointed members were in the audience and stood up to introduce themselves. They were Tamiko Stroud and Sarah Procopio.

Senator Page Cortez discussed his SB 283 of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature. SB 283 provides relative to the content of certain Civics courses. Senator Cortez had a constituent come to him and ask if he was aware of the Civics Education Initiative to ensure that our students know more about American History, the political process, and the nature of civics. This constituent was a Korean war veteran and he loves this country more than anything. He wanted to ensure that we are growing an American population that understands what the United States is all about. The initiative suggests that in each state, in order to graduate from high school, you should pass the naturalization test that immigrants must take in order to become citizens of the U.S. Due to the fiscal situation the state is facing, the bill was amended to require that the test be given and passed during a the civics class in order for the student to graduate.

Terry Landry asked Senator Cortez if the students will be allowed to take the test multiple times in order to pass and were there any penalties if the student did not pass the test?

Senator Cortez answered that the student would fail one unit of the civics class for that year if they failed the test. This bill will allow the students to take the test multiple times. This may not prevent them from graduating as in most schools you can fail one unit and still pass the course. The object of this was to get the students to understand more about our government.

Lauren Russell and Morgan Blanchard gave an update on the Legislators Back to School Program.

Ms. Courtney introduced Kevin Gautreaux who is the producer of LPB's Public Square and came to talk about the American Graduate program. It is a national project which is focused on keeping children in school until they graduate. Louisiana is part of this national initiative and he is here to give you a brief report on the program.

Kevin Gautreaux spoke to the Commission about the American Graduate program. It is a program funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It involves over 80 public radio and television stations across 30 states and the goal is drop out prevention. It requires the various public radio and television stations to address and share best practices and drop out prevention in the community that they serve. As far as Louisiana's graduation statistics, the good news is that we have reached a high in our high school graduation rate of 74.6% in 2014. Studies show that the best drop out prevention is early childhood education and in Louisiana we have pre-K programs serving about 1/3 of the state's four year olds. The bad news is that our graduation rate still lags behind the national average of 81% and 18 school districts saw their graduation rates actually decline in 2014. LPB does several things within this initiative to reach students. We do educational outreach, host intensive literacy and science camps for 800 pre-schoolers in high

need schools around the state. We've distributed mobile science labs to more than 37 schools and we've hosted or moderated over 25 supervised camps for four year olds. In addition, we provide two digital libraries to 1,500 pre-K to 12th grade schools which reach over 700,000 students. Among the events we are doing production wise is something called "town hall meetings" which will follow the format of the show Public Square. We also have an American Graduate website where we are asking people to nominate champions, people or organizations that help to engage students and help to keep them on a path towards graduation.

Dr. Anna Mahoney, Professor of Women's Political Leadership at Tulane University spoke to the Commission about Women in Politics. She shared information from the Center for American Women in Politics at Rucker's University. According to their data from 2014 and 2015 roughly about 24% of all state legislators across the country are women. This is a stagnant number. The state with the highest percentage of women legislators is Colorado and they are at 42%. In Louisiana we are dead last with only 12.5% of our legislators being women. Dr. Mahoney listed several reasons why women do not typically run for office and the different factors that motivate them.

Representative Regina Barrow spoke to the Commission on her rise through government and the various challenges and issues she had to face to get to where she is.

D'Wayne Bell a member of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council updated the Commission on LYAC's activities including SCR 79 which urges and requests each city, parish and local public school board to provide for high school student interaction with the school board in an informative, advisory, and nonvoting capacity.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, Fredell Butler moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Courtney, Chairwoman

Approved: